/63 cont./

854 593 It is simply touching to see how lovingly and solicitously every mother treats her child. But the love of the father is no less great. He openly acknowledges the child and clearly shows his feelings of pride and fatherliness (318), though he is otherwise

[114] [171] 318. In contrast to this, Alexander von Humboldt, with reference to the Indians on the Orinoco, writes that fathers do not have any affection for their children (A. von Humboldt, 1860, III, p. 155).

very reserved in his expressions of feeling. When he comes wearily into the communal house after a strenuous hunting expedition or from his field work, he never forgets to devote himself first of all to his little child for a while. He either takes it on his arm and goes walking with it, or he lays it beside him in the hammock. Even during migrations of the tribe he sometimes [858] carries the child for hours. Moreover, he loves a daughter just as much as a son.

854 304 During the first year of life the ear lobes and the lower lips of boys and girls are pierced by the mother with a sharp palm thorn, and, in addition, the girls are given perforations in the corners of the mouth. To prevent the wounds from healing, small wooden rods are stuck in temporarily and moved back and forth 304 frequently.

854 833 When a little girl has completed the first year of life, she is deflowered by the mother with her finger. This procedure is done in preparation for sexual intercourse later on.

114 171 Similar procedures were observed by von Feldner among the Machacarí /Mashacali/ Indians, and he describes them as follows: 854 "Nulla inter illas invenitur virgo, quia mater inde a tenera aetate 833 filiae maxima cum cura omnem vaginae constrictionem 304 ingredimentumque amovere studet hoc quidem modo: manui dextrae imponitur folium arboris in infundibuli formam redactum, et dum index, in partes genitales immissus huc et illuc movetur, per infundibulum aqua tepida immittitur" (319). In this connection

319. von Feldner, 1828, II, p. 149, footnote.

/72 cont./

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333. (cont.)
p. 70). Among the Piaroa Indians very weak old people are walled up alive in a cave. They are given food and drink for several more days and, when this has been used up, die of enervation (Marquis de Wavrin, 1944, pp. 197/98).

members destined for death are thus dispatched into the other world in an altogether humane manner, and even the killing itself is dictated by humane impulses. Since these old and sick persons can, of course, no longer take part in the customary seminomadic way of life, they would be obliged to remain helplessly behind when the tribe sets out on a new migration. This is to be prevented, however, /73/ and at the same time it is desired that the way to the moon, the paradise of the dead, be opened for them. After their death, they are cremated in the same way as all other deceased persons, that is to say, in the case of old people only the head is burned, and their ashes, too, are preserved and drunk at the festival in memory of the dead.

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775 Greater than the fear of death among all Surára and Pakidái is the thought that they might one day die without being cremated, for example, during military actions, for then the entrance into the moon is barred for their soul (see p. 198).

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[184] Persons who commit incest are excluded from cremation after their demise, and they are not mourned, for incest is regarded as the greatest crime. Poré (see p. 197) does not want their souls on the moon, and partaking of their bone ashes would exert unfavorable influences on the male members of the tribe. They are therefore tied up in a squatting position and buried in a hole in the ground.

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774 If children die before the completion of the third year of life, they are thrown into the river without any ceremony, since they belong to the flesh and blood of the mother and do not yet have their own soul (see p. 138).

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
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minutes later the two women were quietly walking home with the baby, who appeared to be dead.

While the mother goes about her normal tasks, with the child tied on her back all the time, the father stays in the hammock, absolutely motionless, eating nothing but fruit and palm-hearts—'they don't heat the blood,' Luis Antonio assured us.

Among the Guiana-Amazon Indians I have never heard of the father himself suffering from birth-pangs during this period of rest. Such reports, however, have come from travellers and observers of the Indian tribes inhabiting the southern regions of the lower Amazon. Before one can believe them one must accept a little more than the theory of the inter-relation of cause and effect. A good dose of barefaced auto-suggestion would also be needed to account for this phenomenon, and only the most undeveloped of the Indians would be capable of it.

IV

Of kindred interest, while we are on the subject of childbirth, is the organization of Indian society. It has been asked whether the pattern is patriarchal or matriarchal, and what part is played by the individual family.

If the question is limited to the Shirians, the answer is simple: they have reached no stage of organization above the rudimentary animal level. The family has the sole function of producing life and protecting it until the offspring is capable of fending for itself. Their society is not patriarchal, because the role of the family ceases where its physical functions cease, at the point where, in civilized societies, moral functions begin. Nor is the pattern matriarchal, because the women are held in a form of slavery, though the very lack of an exact social system means that they sometimes emerge from this to become the companions of the men—a state of affairs which may be regarded as more emancipated, or less.

The children of both sexes, while they are young, remain the exclusive responsibility of the women, but when the boys reach an age at which they can do without their mothers (this generally means as soon as they cease to be breast-fed) they become independent males and do not belong to anybody in particular. Up to a certain point the father is free to pick out one who may be

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
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especially strong and intelligent, and keep him at his side, adopting him, as it were, as his successor. The little girls continue to live in the feminine world of their tribe. Shy and submissive, they take on the humblest tasks, fetching water, making the fire and helping in the preparation—highly problematical—of food.

Such definitions of customs have, however, only a relative value, like any attempt to estimate the Shirian way of life: for Shirians are to be found spread over wild territory of vast extent. Their customs are less well defined than one might suppose after reading certain tracts about primitive peoples—the Pacific islanders, for instance. These give the impression that with slight formal changes only, Western culture might have much to learn from the degree of social organization they have attained to. The Shirian tribes, cut off from one another as they are by physical barriers such as mountains and rivers, and moral barriers like the ceaseless state of war which exists between the various branches of this race of 'howling Indians', have developed their own customs in their own sporadic fashion. Sometimes they have been weakened by contact with foreigners, such as the Makiritari in the north-west and the Makushi in the east. More often they have been weakened by a lack of strong traditions, which do not spring easily from such an excessively low level of culture, where mere survival calls for an unending struggle against the tremendous power of the eternally hostile forest.

The most primitive races are those most affected by their geographical setting. Their environment conditions them. Only by adapting themselves continually to their surroundings, only by the long process of response to the determining factor of geography, can they create that growing racial identity which at last succeeds in reversing the process—that is, in conditioning the surroundings instead of being conditioned by them. But we are here touching on the larger question of the development of civilization generally.

Where the Shirians are concerned, we are still at the beginning of the beginning, when geography is the absolute determining factor. Here environment is the master of man—a creature inferior, qualitatively and quantitatively, to the region which it is his fate to inhabit.

The territory they occupy is immense. Divided though it may be by great cordilleras, which make it the breeding ground for various rivers rushing north, west and south, it possesses one marked characteristic throughout its whole extent: the sources and the headwaters of the rivers are contained in a sort of

774 I, in effect, was capturing the *noruhi* of the child: A photograph was called *noruhi*.[13]
825 Tape recordings, in contrast, were not considered to be harmful. If anything, they enjoyed
177 having me record their music and discussions, and always demanded that I play them
123 back for everyone to hear. The word used to describe a recording was *no ubudibö*, the part
126 of the soul that wanders in the jungle after the body is cremated. In short, only the *noruhi* aspect of the soul is vulnerable.

766 TREATMENT OF THE DEAD If a person dies in an epidemic, his body, along with those of the others who died, is placed on a tree platform and allowed to decay. After
[889] several months, an old man is appointed to strip the remaining decayed flesh from the bones and the bones are then cremated. The Yanomamö fear the smoke that is produced
[63] when a body is cremated, and since epidemics are feared, they do not take a chance on
[783] contaminating the houses, implements, and persons with the smoke produced by the burning bodies.

764 Under normal circumstances, the body of the deceased is placed on a pyre of logs, covered with additional wood, and allowed to burn until nothing but the large bones
[783] are left. The burning takes place in the village, usually in the afternoon. The children and
[562] women leave, as they are susceptible to contamination by the smoke. They all bathe
[858] carefully to wash off any possible contamination. Even the weapons are washed.

After the coals are cool enough to handle, the relatives sift the ashes meticulously with shallow, loosely woven baskets, collecting every bit of bone they can find. The charcoal of the wood is burned, lest a small piece of bone be mixed in with it. The accumulated bones are then ground in a log mortar, hollowed out by means of alternate burning and chopping. These logs are about 4 feet long and 6 to 8 inches in diameter.
[239] For grinding the bones of a male, white buzzard down is usually attached around the
[531] circumference of the mortar, and curved lines painted on the mortar with red pigment.
[562] The mortars used for females are not decorated as elaborately, but usually have decorative fibers of a palm tree, the kind used by women to decorate their perforated ears. Circles and dots are painted on the mortars of females.

The charred bones of the dead are placed, a few at a time, into the mortar and a
[531] long, slender pole is used as the pestle. These poles are about 6 feet long, 2 or 3 inches in diameter, and bear painted decorations. The bones are crushed into a black powder by a young man, while the relatives of the deceased sit around the mortar and weep profusely. The ground ashes are then transferred to hollow gourds through a small hole and
[266] sealed with wax and buzzard down. A little is left in the mortar and eaten, mixed with boiled plantain soup, on the day of the ceremony. The mortar is always burned after a ceremony.

769 About a year later, the rest of the ashes are eaten during a feast, again mixed with
266 boiled plantain soup. Occasionally, they will deliberately save some of the ashes, especially ashes of those who were killed in raids, making use of them for a number of cere-
[926] monies. Before each attempt at getting revenge, the raiders eat the ashes of their slain kinsman. This puts them into the appropriate state of rage for the business of killing enemies.

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[13]Many informants gave a more pragmatic explanation of their fear of the camera. They did not want to be reminded of their dead kinsman, and if I had a photograph of the person, this would be an extremely offensive reminder to his relatives that their loved one was dead.

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11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

Women always bring their children with them, particularly younger children, so that if they are abducted, the child will not starve to death because of the separation of the mother. They are therefore concerned with the political behavior of their men and occasionally goad them into taking action against some possible enemy by caustically accusing the men of cowardice. This has the effect of establishing the village's reputation for ferocity, reducing the possibility of raiders abducting the women while they are out collecting firewood or garden produce. The men cannot stand being chided by the women in this fashion, and are forced to take action if the women unite against them.

562 721 [855]

CHILD-ADULT DIVISION Despite the fact that children of both sexes spend much of their time with their mothers, the boys alone are treated with considerable indulgence by their fathers from an early age. Thus, the distinction between male and female status develops early in the socialization process, and the boys are quick to learn their favored position with respect to girls. They are encouraged to be "fierce" and are rarely punished by their parents for inflicting blows on them or on the hapless girls in the village. Kaobawä, for example, lets Ariwari beat him on the face and head to express his anger and temper, laughing and commenting on his ferocity. Although Ariwari is only about four years old, he has already learned that the appropriate response to a flash of anger is to strike someone with his hand or with an object, and it is not uncommon for him to give his father a healthy smack in the face whenever something displeases him. He is frequently goaded into hitting his father by teasing, being rewarded by gleeful cheers of assent from his mother and from the other adults in the household.

858 865 [593]

Fig. 3-7. Ariwari, Kaobawä's favorite son, building a make-believe house while camping with his father. His "sister" (father's brother's daughter) looks on.

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11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

When Kąobawä's group travels, Ariwari emulates his father by copying his activities on a child's scale. For example, he erects a temporary hut from small sticks and discarded leaves and plays happily in his own camp (see Fig. 3–7). His sisters, however, are pressed into more practical labor and help their mother do useful tasks. Still, the young girls are given some freedom to play at being adults and have their moments of fun with their mothers.

But a girl's childhood ends sooner than a boy's. The game of playing house fades imperceptibly into a constant responsibility to help mother. By the time a girl is ten years old or so, she has become an economic asset to the mother and spends a great deal of time working. Little boys, by contrast, spend hours playing among themselves and are able to prolong their childhood into their late teens if they so wish. By that time a girl has married, and may even have a child or two.

A girl's transition to womanhood is obvious because of its physiological manifestations. At first menses (*yobïmou*) Yąnomamö girls are confined to their houses and hidden behind a screen of leaves. Their old cotton garments are discarded and replaced by new ones manufactured by their mothers or by older female friends. During this week of confinement, the girl is fed by her relatives; her food must be eaten by means of a stick, as she is not allowed to come into contact with it in any other fashion. She must also scratch herself with another set of sticks. The Yąnomamö word for menstruation translates literally as "squatting" (*no*), and that fairly accurately describes what pubescent females (and adult women) do during menstruation. Yąnomamö women do not employ tampons; they simply remain inactive during menstruation, squatting on their haunches most of the time. After her puberty confinement, a girl is eligible to begin life as a wife and take up residence with her husband.

Males, on the other hand, do not have their transition into manhood marked by a ceremony. Nevertheless, one can usually tell when a boy is attempting to enter the world of men. The most conspicuous sign is his anger when others call him by his name. When the adults in the village cease using his personal name, the young man has achieved some sort of masculine adult status. Young men are always very touchy about their names and they, more than anyone else, take quick offense when hearing their names mentioned. The Yąnomamö constantly employ teknonymy when a kinship usage is ambiguous. Thus, someone may wish to refer to Kąobawä in a conversation, but the kinship term appropriate to the occasion might not distinguish him from his several brothers. Then, Kąobawä will be referred to as "father of Ariwari." However, when Ariwari gets older, he will attempt to put a stop to this in an effort to establish his status as an adult. A young man has been recognized as an adult when people no longer use his name in teknonymous references. Still, the transition is not abrupt, and it is not marked by a recognizable point in time.

Finally, the children differ from adults in their susceptibility to supernatural hazards. A great deal of Yąnomamö sorcery and mythological references to harmful magic focuses on children as the target of malevolence. Yąnomamö shamans are constantly sending evil spirits (*Hekura*) to enemy villages. There, they secretly attack and devour the vulnerable portion of the childrens' souls (*noreshi*), bringing about sickness and death. These same shamans spend an equal amount of time warding off the dangerous spirits sent by their enemies. Children are vulnerable because their souls are not firmly established within their physical beings, and can wander out of the body almost at will. The

11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

most common way for a child's soul to escape is to leave by way of the mouth when the child cries. Thus, mothers are quick to hush a bawling baby in order to prevent its soul from escaping. The child's soul can be recovered by sweeping the ground in the vicinity where it most probably escaped, calling for it while sweeping the area with a particular kind of branch. I once helped gather up the soul of a sick child in this fashion, luring it back into the sick baby. One of the contributions I made, in addition to helping with the calling and sweeping, was a dose of medicine for the child's diarrhea. A consequence of this set of attitudes about the vulnerability of children is that much of the village's activity with respect to shamanism and curing is directed toward the children.

RELATIVES BY BLOOD AND BY MARRIAGE Many forms of interpersonal behavior stem largely from the social roles implied in the kinship system. To be sure, some kinship behavior reflects the two distinctions of age and sex discussed above, for the terminology of kinship itself employs discriminations of this kind. For example, there are terms to distinguish older siblings from younger siblings and terms used by members of one sex only in reference to those of the opposite sex.

The relationship between kinship terms and biological parentage is not the same in the Yąnomamö language as it is in our own. As was shown in the first section of this chapter, people may stand in a child relationship to a number of individuals; that is, it is possible to have multiple "mothers" and "fathers" in Yąnomamö society. The term for mother and father conveys as much of a social as a biological relationship between individuals, and in the daily activities of the Yąnomamö it is the social implications of kinship roles that are most important.

What is implied in the kinship roles can best be seen in the way the kinship terms themselves are formed. All primary kinship terms take the ending *"-mou"* when used to describe the relationship between individuals. Thus, *osheya* means "my younger sibling," but *oshemou* means that individual X *behaves* toward individual Y *as a younger sibling*. This ending, *-mou*, also occurs in nonkinship usage to express "a way of behaving," "to execute a particular activity in a specified manner," or "to perform the activity that is implied by the word to which *-mou* is affixed." For example, *oko* means fresh-water crab and *okomou* means "to go hunting for crabs"; *bowabi* means "a mischievous white monkey" and *bowabimou* means "to act mischievously, to monkey around"; *nowa naha* means "enemy," and *nowa nahamou* means "to become an enemy by behaving objectionably"; *waiteri* means "fierce" and *waiterimou* means "to behave ferociously."

Whenever I would ask the Yąnomamö a question such as, "What do you call Kąobawä?" the answers would always be in the form of a kinship term to which *"-mou"* was affixed, but rarely in the form "I say such-and-such to him." Calling an individual by a specific term is, however, implied in the "way of behaving" toward that individual. But despite the fact that the Yąnomamö can say, literally, "I call him father" (*kama kä iha, haya ya kuu*), they invariably say *"ya hąimou"*—"I behave toward him as a child."[20] Thus, they express their relationships to others in terms of *ways of behavior*. Each kinship category implies a set of these behavioral norms, and one's social life in the community is established with respect to all other individuals by the kinship terminology employed in each particular case.

[20]Although the word *hąi* translates literally as "father," the expression *ya hąimou* can best be understood with the translation given above.